

## THE MESSAGE OF CALVARY

(John 3:16)

### Let Us Pray:

***Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen.***

Text: John 3:16

For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.'

Dear friends in Christ,

The Good Friday message is the message of Calvary. This message is brought to you through the Word of God and by the Church of Jesus Christ. Perhaps nowhere else in the Bible is this message brought to you in such concise yet complete terms as a favourite verse of the Bible, John 3:16.

Words have a way of failing us when we try to point out what happened at Calvary. This much is certain: God gave his only Son. He didn't have to do it, but he did. Jesus tried to give his disciples a vision of God's giving of self, when he called them together and said, "Behold we are going up to Jerusalem." But the Scriptures go on to say, "They understood none of these things."

As we stand before the cross of Calvary on this Good Friday, trying to grasp the message it has for us, it must be recorded also of us, "We understood none of these things." For who can understand the mind of God? But thank God the message of Calvary is for us to experience, even though we cannot fully understand it, And in order to get a better appreciation of what God did and what he gave us at Calvary, let us think for a while of the other side of Calvary, which is our (humans) part in Calvary.

Our part in Calvary is told in one single phrase, "And they crucified him". They nailed him to a cross. They drove cruel, long nails through his holy hands and through his holy feet. And they lifted up the cross, and dropped it into a hole in the ground, and left him there to die, a slow and agonising death. Although no sin had scarred him, and he had been only kind and good, this is the foul record of what they did to him, they crucified him!

Our first reaction to this horrible scene is one of moral indignation as we exclaim, "what wicked people!" But wait! How I wish with all my heart that I would not have to number you and me among that crowd who crucified the sinless One. But I must! You had a part in it and I had a part in it.

At Calvary the eternal truth the prophet spoke is fulfilled before our very eyes, "And the Lord has laid on Jesus the sin of us all".

The message of Calvary declares that there is sin with deep roots and an evil power at work in every human's heart and life, capable of such a dastardly deed as to crucify the sinless One!. But thank God on this solemn Good Friday that the message of Calvary has a much more hopeful part, and that is God's part in Calvary.

God the Father deliberately gave his Son. They weren't taking his life from him. Jesus didn't have to go to Jerusalem. He could have gone somewhere else if he wanted to, but he deliberately chose to go to Jerusalem. He was deliberately taking hold of our wilfulness and stubbornness, our sin, and making it his own. He wanted us to know that he would not evade the issue of our sin, ever. He would hold on and taste every drop of the bitter, bitter cup of our hatred and sin. This was the only way God the Father could think of to draw us once more to himself. "For God so love the world that he gave".

So, Jesus dug himself in there at Calvary with that everlasting love for us which refuses to let us go, even when we forget him. The cross is not a symbol of that. The cross is precisely that. That cross ever stands there, marking the immeasurable length to which God's love went in order to save us.

And so, the kingdom of God begins with a gift. It is God's gift. "For God so loved the world that he gave." He gives himself with his love even to us now through his Word and through Holy Communion. it is high time that we let the message of Calvary speak its wonderful truth to us now, in order to stamp out the heresy, "The Church is irrelevant, the Church doesn't matter." The Church, Jesus' precious body on this planet, calls you and me every Sunday to Calvary, to behold the love of our God, and to worship him in response. And to receive his love in faith. Love to cover all our sins, our daily needs, and our own death. Not because of what we are, but because of what He is. God is love!

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he first loved us."

This morning, as we stand there with the others at the cross, through the blackness surrounding Calvary, a piercing light shines from the very throne of God, and we can hear him say to each of us, "*I loved the world so much that gave mv only Son, that if you believe in him you shall not perish but have eternal life.*" *"Lord, I believe!"* And with that confession the message of Calvary becomes for each one of us the message of salvation and certainty and life rather than punishment and death. This is the message that our dear God and Father would have all people, including you and me, receive on this solemn Good Friday.

God grant for all people, whoever and wherever they might be on this day, salvation, joy and peace at the cross of Calvary. For us may it always remain our promise and pledge of salvation, which we have accepted and kept through faith in our personal Saviour and Friend, Jesus. For this is indeed the wonderful message of Calvary for each one of us and for others.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Sermon by Pastor Graham Zweck

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